LVGLTF

THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY

The Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Gay and Lesbian Task Force / Vol.3, Issue 1

BEAUTY SCHOOL SETTLES HARASSMENT LAWSUIT

A lawsuit claiming that Gordon Phillips School of Beauty Culture forced out gay employees because they might develop AIDS has been settled out of court.

In August 1995, Robert Rychalsky, the school's former controller, charged that the school and its majority stock holder, Stan Gordon, violated the Americans with Disabilities Act and the federal Rehabilitation Act by targeting him for harassment soon after he told his supervisors that he had a brain tumor.

Rychalsky claimed that he was present at meetings in which Gordon and unnamed executives tried to increase profits by identifying employees who had higher than average health-care costs, such as those with AIDS or cancer, and then harassing them into quitting.

But before the suit, which was filed in December in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, could be heard, both sides agreed to settle the dispute.

Christopher J. Moran, one of Rychalsky's attorneys with the law firm of Schnader, Harrison, Segal & Lewis in Philadelphia, declined to comment on the settlement. "I'm not at liberty to talk about it," Moran said.

Frederick Wilson, the school's president, said both parties agreed to keep terms of the agreement confidential.

However, he did deny the substance of Rychalsky's claims. "Gordon Phillips has had a number of instructors and employees who have been HIV-positive, and we have stuck with them and worked with them until they felt they were no longer able to work," Wilson said. "We're very proud of what we have done."

The school's health-care benefit program, which was last revised in the early 1990s, was set up in such a way that executives would not know what kinds of illnesses people were experiencing, Wilson said.

From its headquarters in Upper Darby, Gordon Phillips operates 12 cosmetology schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland. They include schools in Allentown and Bethlehem. ▲

DIVERSITY PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS THREATENED

Editor's note: Frank Baran, who edits a national newsletter on AIDS policy and litigation, covered a congressional hearing in December that took aim at school-based programs that try to teach tolerance for gay men and lesbians. Here are some of his observations:

By FRANK BARAN

People began lining up three hours in advance for a chance to witness the hearings, which had been postponed several times last year. Candace Gingrich, Newt's half-sister, was in the hallway outside, putting the finishing touches to the Human Rights Campaign's response to the expected anti-gay attacks. Inside the cramped hearing room, Rep. Barney Frank paced back and forth, conferring with fellow Democrats on the subcommittee. His gay colleague, Republican Rep. Steve Gunderson, honed his opening remarks.

The hearings, conducted Dec. 5-6 by the House Education and Opportunities subcommittee on oversight and investigations, were billed

Continued on p.3

APRIL 1996

INSIDE

SPAHR VISIT

Anti-gay posters, threatening phone calls and ridicule on the radio greet the Rev. Jane Spahr's visit to the Valley. See page 2.

FAREWELL

Dr. Manny Gonzalez resigns as president of L.V.G.L.T.F. PAGE 4

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting gets a new look. See page 5.

The Voice of Valley
Published by
the Lehigh Valley Gay
and Lesbian Task Force
P.O. Box 20253
Lehigh Valley, PA
18002-0253

Communications Committee
Peach Trigiani
Chris Gaugler

Contributors
Frank Baran
Chris Ackner-Boes
David Charrier
Renae Bennett
Steve Black
Kathy Smith

TASK FORCE PLANS RESPONSE TO SEX ED FUROR

The Task Force is monitoring developments in the case of a teacher in the Wind Gap Middle School who was suspended for two weeks without pay for answering students' questions about how gay men and lesbians have sex.

About 40 parents called for the firing of the teacher, Anita Kotoris, at a school board meeting in November. The parents also presented a petition bearing 165 signatures asking for Kotoris' dismissal.

The uproar started 11 months after the incident took place. The parents claimed it took them that long to piece together details of what happened during Kotoris' health class on Dec. 13, 1994.

According to the parents, Kotoris held an open forum on Dec. 13, 1994, for sixth-grade students to anonymously submit written questions to her. Someone asked Kotoris to explain sexual intercourse, which she did. Another question asked how gay men and lesbians have sex.

The parents' letter to the school board claimed Kotoris explained that, in gay men, "the erect penile shaft is inserted into the anus of the partner."

The parents said sex education is not part of the required sixth-grade curriculum. They claimed their children were disturbed, embarrassed and confused.

Task Force board member Steve Black, a former member of the Pen Argyl Area School Board, proposed sending a delegation to the next school board meeting. He said he hopes to be appointed to a panel of teachers, school administrators and citizens to examine the district's sex education curriculum.

"The parents' petition was based on homophobia," Steve said. "It's important that we not let the charges of the parents group go unanswered."

The Task Force has been in touch with the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network, as well as Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, based in New York.

Because the teacher apparently wants no further controversy, Steve will stress the importance of tolerance in the public schools and suggest that issues relating to sexuality and sexual orientation be included in the sex education curriculum. ▲

SPAHR VISIT DID NOT GO UNNOTICED

The Rev. Jane Spahr, the first openly lesbian minister in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, brought prayers of hope and words of encouragement during her visit to the Lehigh Valley in November.

However, not everyone got the message.

An anti-gay poster was tacked to a tree on the front yard of a Moravian minister who helped organize Spahr's visit. Another poster was hung on a utility pole nearby. On the morning Spahr was scheduled to speak at Moravian Theological Seminary, an anonymous male caller phoned the minister's wife.

"He launched into a vicious diatribe," said Renae Bennett, co-chair of the Task Force's Discrimination Committee. "He was using words like 'monkeys' and 'apes,' and that we deserved to die. Then he just hung up."

As a precaution, Moravian Seminary stepped up security. Northampton Community College, where Spahr was to speak later on, also had its security detail out in force.

Spahr's presentations and worship services went without incident.

Meanwhile, WZZO's Bearman and Keith, the morning disc jockeys, devoted a segment of their Nov. 3 broadcast ridiculing Spahr because of her sexual orientation.

Renae and Steve Black, who co-chairs the Discrimination Committee, plan to meet with WZZO officials, including the disk jockeys, to register a protest and ask them to refrain from demeaning the Valley's gay population. ▲

GOOSEY GANDER
CATERING & DELI
1017 E. Emmaus Ave. • Salisbury Twp.
Phone: 791-5333 • Fax: 791-5157
DAVID A. SOSKA

• All Occasion Party Trays
• Hot or Cold Buffet Catering
• 101 Varieties of Hoagies & Sandwiches

MILLER & SENG Co.
AUDIO VIDEO
Allentown's oldest & largest family owned dealer & servicer of consumer electronics.
1050 Lehigh Street
Allentown, PA 18103
phone: 610-433-2748 fax: 610-433-7386

CONGRESSIONAL HEARING Continued from p. 1

as an exploration of how parents and educators transmit values to children. That sounded innocuous, but in reality Republican leaders stacked the deck by scheduling speakers that attacked tolerance, sex education and school-based AIDS awareness programs.

The Human Rights Campaign charged that most of the witnesses invited to testify were part of an anti-gay campaign orchestrated by Lou Sheldon, a California minister and chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition.

Prior to the 1994 election, Rep. Newt Gingrich promised Sheldon that if the Republicans won the election, he would conduct hearings to determine whether federally funded AIDS prevention programs promote homosexuality. As House Speaker, Gingrich told a town meeting in Kennesaw, Ga., in January 1995 that he intended to respect Sheldon's wishes.

That's not the spin the subcommittee tried to put on the hearings. An aide to Rep. Peter Hoekstra, R-Mich., who chairs the subcommittee, insisted that Sheldon played no role in selecting the witnesses or shaping the subject matter. "He is not running the hearing in any way, shape or form," said Hoekstra's press secretary, Jon Brandt.

But Sheldon's fingerprints were all over the hearing. Sheldon did not testify, but nevertheless he traveled from California to observe. Outside the hearing room, he told reporters, "All I can say is that the commitment was made and hearings were held. I am 100 percent pleased at the nature of these hearings, and I feel my commitment has been fulfilled."

Hoekstra opened the hearings Dec. 5 by saying the witnesses would examine the role that parents and schools play in transmitting values to children. The first witness, former U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett, told lawmakers that parental involvement plays the biggest role in a child's education. The moral needs of students everywhere were similar, he said, mentioning values such as honesty, fairness, discipline and responsibility as essentials to be taught in schools. Schools should reflect local community standards, rather than a national standard, he said.

The next day, the issues became more contentious. Witnesses condemned local schools that taught that homosexuality falls within the spectrum of normal human behavior. They also attacked school-based AIDS prevention programs.

One theme that ran through their presentations was that public schools are running roughshod over the community's values. On closer scrutiny, their claims proved groundless.

For example, Nancy M. Maclone of Massachusetts was a plaintiff in a lawsuit that challenged the Falmouth School Committee's decision to make condoms available to high school students without prior parental consent. Maclone lost in court. She lost when she ran for school board on a platform to end the condom program. And she and her supporters lost when they put the issue to a referendum. Yet, at the hearing, she complained that the school board "totally ignores the public."

Another witness criticized a booklet published by Minnesota education officials to teach public schools that anti-gay discrimination is not acceptable behavior. Warren D. Grantham said the schools should not bring gay men into classrooms to speak as role models.

"If we have kids who are unsure whether or not to use drugs, we don't push them into the waiting arms of a crack dealer," Grantham said. "If they are confused about whether or not to try alcohol for the first time, we don't send them to the corner liquor store to ask for advice. Likewise, why would we push a student who is confused about sexual identity into the open arms of a person who is an avowed activist and an advocate for that lifestyle?"

Again, Grantham claimed the public didn't want the anti-discrimination program. Yet, when he ran for school board in an effort to kill the program, he came in last in a field of nine candidates.

But it wasn't a homophobe who made the wildest accusations. Those came from someone in our own community. Claire Connelly, a lesbian who founded the Gay and Lesbian Resource Center in Ventura County, Calif., claimed that $3 billion in federal funds trickles down to gay and lesbian community-based organizations nationwide. Some of the money, she charged, goes to pay the salaries of "promiscuous gay men with AIDS." "We now have sexually active gay men with AIDS who do not use condoms themselves providing sex education for children with federal funds," Connelly said. "Congress has created a national gay lobby where none existed before and is fueling the AIDS epidemic."

The Human Rights Campaign said Connelly's assertions were preposterous. "Claire Connelly has a well-documented history of making baseless allegations about government funding for AIDS programs," the HRC said in a statement. The $3 billion figure was debunked long ago, but she continued to cite it as fact.

The HRC said Connelly's New Age spirituality group lost its federal funding and was ejected in 1994 from the county's HIV Care Consortium, which administers AIDS care funding.

At the insistence of the subcommittee's Democrats, some speakers were invited to present opposing viewpoints. The most poignant testimony came from Mary Griffith, an Oregon mother whose son, Bobby, committed suicide two years after dropping out of high school because of the shame he felt about his homosexuality.

"He was a good person, but he was told he that he was bad," said Griffith, who said her family's unforgiving religious faith and his school's ignorance left Bobby with nowhere to turn to for help.

Respect, love and worship are "universal values" that should not be denied to students because of their sexual orientation, Griffith said. ▲

MEETINGS

Gay Men of the Lehigh Valley

Meetings are held on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month at 7 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 424 Center St., Bethlehem. Coming events include: **April 27th Gay in God's Image-**A rabbi and a minister examine homosexuality and the Judeo-Christian tradition. **May 11th Mel White** author of *Stranger at the Gate* will discuss his journey from religious right speech writer to gay-rights activist. **May 25th Party with your sisters!** End of season get together with Lehigh Valley Lesbians. For information call (610) 439-8755.

P-FLAG

PFLAG will be holding their monthly meeting on the second Sunday of the month, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. in room 1876 Thompkins College Center Building, Cedar Crest College, Allentown, PA. For information call (215)368-2473.

Your Turf.

A support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth ages 16 to 22 meets on Friday evenings at 7p.m. Call 439-8755 for location of meeting. The group is sponsored by the Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley.

Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley

Sunday worship services are held at 6PM, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 424 Center St., Bethlehem.

THANK YOU ... AND FAREWELL

By DAVID P. CHARRIER

In the Spring of 1993, just prior to the March on Washington, a group of us were invited to a meeting of Le-Hi-Ho. As a result of that meeting and inspired by the energy we felt marching in Washington, a group of individuals decided to develop a task force, here in the Lehigh Valley, that would address problems facing local gays and lesbians. Dr. Manny Gonzalez is one of those people who was so inspired and who felt that it was possible to make a difference. He quickly became one of the leaders and was part of a core group that developed into the interim Board of the Lehigh Valley Gay and Lesbian Task Force. During three years of hard work, Manny became our first President and helped mold the organization, working closely with other members of the Board and members at large. Manny has been one of the key workers and drivers of our mission, being visible to better our cause and to show that discrimination happens at different levels in the Lehigh Valley. Manny felt that public officials need to be made aware and to sit up, listen, and take action. Members of the Board and members at large worked diligently to make it "OK" to be visible and to stand up and be counted. Manny was one who encouraged by example.

From becoming a member, along with Vice President Chris Boes, of the Allentown Human Relations Commission, to participating in Super Sunday in Allentown, to joining the "Fight the Right" activities, the Stonewall Parade in New York City, the Philadelphia Pride Parade, "Pride Fest" in Allentown, FACT Summer Games, AIDS Walk-a-thon, Manny has been there to help keep the momentum going.

In February, Manny resigned as President of the Lehigh Valley Gay and Lesbian Task Force. We thank Manny for his hard work, his vision, the spirit in which he lead us and for his dedication to the Task Force.▲

YOU CAN HELP US HELP OUR COMMUNITY

Recently the Task Force help-line has fielded a number of requests for the names of gay and lesbian owned/operated businesses. The needs of the callers range far and wide, from handyperson to travel agency. Our phone staffers have tried to direct the callers to appropriate businesses, but more often than not we have no idea who the caller should contact.

If you own, work for, or know of a gay or lesbian owned/operated business please send a business card to LVGLTF, P.O. Box 20253, Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-0253.This information will aid us in responding to future requests.

We can help you grow your business while fulfilling our callers desire to spend their money within the Lehigh Valley gay and lesbian community.

Gay and lesbian businesses are out there! So let's hear about them. ▲

MARIANNE YASSO
Agent

NEW YORK LIFE

The Company You Keep®

New York Life Insurance Company
HC 1, Box 28
Jim Thorpe, PA 18229
Bus. (610) 439-2046 · Res. (717) 325-8454

Registered Representative for NYLIFE Securities Inc.
1401 Cedar Crest Blvd., Suite 201
Allentown, PA 18104
(610) 439-2000

COMING ATTRACTIONS

ACCO: A Chorus Celebrating Women. Spring performances.

April 4, Godfrey Daniels, 8:00 p.m.

June 1, Spring concert, location to be announced, 7:30 p.m.

June 23, Gay Pride.

August 16 Musicfest Vespers, 5:00 p.m.

Lehigh Valley Gay Men's Chorus. Spring concert.

Following up a highly acclaimed fall concert and a performance with opera singer Marilyn Horn last year, this 14 voice ensemble will present their spring concert on Saturday May 11, 8:00 p.m., at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 35 S. 5th Street, Allentown.

The Legue of Gay and Lesbian Voters

April 21, Fundraiser at The Monterey, 4 - 7 p.m.

April 23, and May 28, Roller skating at Skateaway in Whitehall, 7:30 - 10:30 p.m. For more information call (610) 770-6200

Voter's Guides will be available April 23 in all the usual locations or call (610) 432-5449 or (610) 865-7890

PRIDE

This year's Pride Festival will be held on Sunday, June 23, at Cedar Beach Park, from 12- 6 p.m. For more information call (610) 770-6200

Metamorphosis

Women's Gently Used Designer Apparel Sizes 2-26

NOTHING OVER $20!

• Suits • Dresses • Skirts •
• Blouses • Jackets • Pants •
• Handbags • Shoes •

Private Appointments Available • 740-5889

1101 Union Blvd., Allentown
(1/2 block off Union on N. Kearney)
Please - Cash or Check Only

ANNUAL MEETING HAS A NEW FACE

On Sunday, May 19, 1996 Gays and Lesbians from all over the Greater Lehigh Valley will be ringing in spring at the 3rd Annual Membership Meeting. This year's membership meeting will be a picnic, complete with great food, wonderful entertainment, and a host of surprises. As the frost abates and the pale green of spring seedlings emerges in its wake, everyone is struck by the beauty of the outdoors. So we're planning a Sunday afternoon in the sun at Northampton Community College, on the patio adjoining CC 220 where we will meet this year's candidates for the board and have a chance to get to know each other a bit better.

In addition to the important job of casting ballots for board positions, and amendments to the by-laws, our goal for the May picnic is to increase membership. Never has it been more critical to the health of the Lesbian and Gay community than in the advent of the Presidential elections of '96 that we be united. Seldom enough is there opportunity for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered persons to come together to acknowledge the importance of community. The Task Force hopes to be able to provide such an opportunity, and urges everyone to "come out" for the event. If you have never been to an annual membership meeting, you will find Sunday, May 19th is a great time for you to join with others and find out what's going on in the Lehigh Valley, and to meet some of the people who are working for you. If you have been to other Task Force membership meetings, you will be pleasantly surprised to find that the Task Force is reaching out in a new way to our community. If you are not familiar with the Task Force at all, the annual meeting presents the best opportunity for you to learn about this important organization.

No matter who you are, how involved or uninvolved you are in gay and lesbian issues in the Lehigh Valley, the Task Force Annual Membership meeting is the place to be. Where else could you be entertained by the talents of members of your own community, enjoy great food, be eligible to win any number of great door prizes, learn about the other organizations in the valley, support the efforts of hard working members of the Task Force, and just rub elbows with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons in an atmosphere of community.

One of the highlights of the afternoon will be the presentation of the First Annual Lehigh Valley Gay and Lesbian Community Service Award - presented to an individual who has made a significant and positive contribution to the Gay and Lesbian Community of the Lehigh Valley.

So, COME OUT! and support the Task Force and join us as we Kick Off the Spring Season together. ▲

BINGO BINGO BINGO

Enjoy the company of old and new friends during bingo games on the third Sunday of the month at Diamonz from 3 to 5 p.m.

The next bingo is Sunday, April 21.

The games are $1 for a regular card, which entitles you to compete for cash; $2 for a special card, for products and services donated by gay or gay-friendly businesses.

JOIN US...

... in making the Lehigh Valley a better and safer place to live. You can help by becoming a member of the Task Force.

Name

Street address

City,

State, Zip

Municipality (city, borough, township)

Telephone

- ❑ **$15 Basic membership**
  Benefits: mailing list, referral database, volunteer opportunities, lesbian and gay community information, newsletter, a vote at meetings
- ❑ **$10 Student or senior member**
  Benefits: same as above. However, students under 18 do not vote.
- ❑ **$25 Family Membership**
  Benefits: Same as basic membership. This category is for domestic partners and their children living in the same household. Each person gets 1 vote for a maximum of 2 votes per family. Children under 18 do not vote.
- ❑ **$30 Organizational member**
  Benefits: Newsletter, referral database, free listing in newsletter. No vote.
- ❑ **Contributor**
  Help the Task Force pay for mailings and other start-up expenses. Your donations would be very much appreciated.

Detach and mail to: LVGLTF, P.O. Box 20253, Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-0253

Get the Word Out!

Do you want to reach the Lehigh Valley gay community with your product or service? An advertisement in The Voice of the Valley is the way to go.

The Task Force newsletter is distributed to members and patrons of gay-friendly establishments in Lehigh and Northampton counties. Total circulation is 1,000.

ADVERTISING RATES

Full page	$150
Half page	$75
Quarter page	$50
Business card	$25

10% discount for full year

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

July issue	June 15
October issue	September 15

HELP-LINE NEWS

We are in the process of relocating our phone line, and by the time this newsletter reaches you, we will have have a new number. If you have tried to call the Help-line and did not get through please try again, calls will be forwarded to the new number.

Have you renewed your membership?

The Task Force needs your support. Please renew your membership by filling out the form at left.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH!

Have you moved? Let us know. The Membership Committee needs to know your current address so we can be sure to send you the Voice of the Valley and other announcements. Use this handy form:

NAME

YOUR OLD ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

YOUR NEW ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

MUNICIPALITY

TELEPHONE

Detach and mail to: LVGLTF, P.O. Box 20253, Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-0253